

EXETER-WEST GREENWICH DECEMBER 7, 2004

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MINUTES

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School Committee held a meeting on this date at

7 p.m. in the Junior-Senior High School Auditorium. Members present were Bill Clay, Chairman; Teri Cicero; Susan DeSack; Gregory Coutcher; William Munroe; Frank Maher; and Paul McFadden, Clerk. Superintendent Roy M. Seitsinger, Jr.; Director of Curriculum Philip D. Thornton; Director of Administration Robert V. Ross; Director of Special Services Maureen DeCrescenzo; and Student Representative Jaclyn Manchester were present.

The Exeter-West Greenwich Big Band Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Greg Charest, performed for School Committee members and members of the public from

7:00 – 7:15 p.m.

Following the performance, Mr. Charest gave an overview of the many accomplishments of the Jazz Ensemble and its members. Mr. Charest communicated that there is a need for another music teacher, noting that he has seen a growth in the Music Department of 200% in the last 3 years. Also, Mr. Charest asked School Committee members to make a one time investment in some much needed equipment.

ORDER – Chair Clay called the meeting to order, in the Jr. – Sr. High Library, at

7:20 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all and Member McFadden read the District Mission Statement.

OPEN FORUM – Member Cicero played a song, Now is the Time to put Children First, By Bob Wickline, for the audience. She stated that the song expressed her views.

A member of the Exeter Town Council congratulated the new Exeter School Committee members. Also, he asked the committee to make sure that the Grade 9 English writing assignment mentioned in the newspaper does not occur again.

A parent from the town of Exeter echoed the Town Council member's message.

A parent from West Greenwich spoke on behalf of the Jr. – Sr. High band and

Mr. Charest. She asked the School Committee members to support the Music Department.

A parent of a Grade 9 student expressed her concerns about the Grade 9 English writing assignment.

Superintendent Seitsinger responded to the parent's concerns. He explained the assignment has been discontinued and will not occur again.

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WELCOMING – New School Committee Members – Chair Clay welcomed the new School Committee members and asked all School Committee members to give their statement of purpose.

Member Cicero communicated the following:

She believes we need to put children first, we must work together in order to succeed and accomplish, and we need to focus on the positive in order to provide a quality education for our children.

Member DeSack communicated the following:

Her hopes and goals for her time on the School Committee are to understand the impact the district has on our children and our communities, without compromising the education of our children. Also, when she leaves the district, she hopes she has enhanced the educational opportunities and experiences for our children, as well as paid attention to what the taxpayers in both communities need and deserve.

Member Coutcher communicated the following:

His intent is to ensure the district continues to perform well and he wants to look for alternative means for funding.

Member McFadden communicated the following:

He believes the quality of education can only be achieved with the consent of the community, we need to involve the community and parents, and we need to assure the educational system is properly funded.

Member Munroe communicated the following:

He would like to work closely with parents and stay abreast of happenings in the district. He urged parents to contact him with any concerns they might have.

Member Maher communicated the following:

The school district needs to work together as a team to solve problems and to make sure our educational process is accountable for the amount of investment we are putting into it. He will work to the best of his ability for the children and the taxpayers.

Chair Clay communicated the following:

He will advocate for a better education for our children and will work on assuring our mandates get done. He will put education first.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION – Elections of School Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk – Member Munroe moved to nominate Member McFadden for Chairperson. Seconded by Frank Maher. Voted 3 – 4. Voting no were Chair Clay, Members DeSack, Coutcher and Cicerio.

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Member Cicero moved to nominate Member DeSack for Chairperson. Seconded by Chair Clay. Voted 4 – 3. Voting no were Members McFadden, Munroe and Maher.

Members McFadden and Munroe stood up and left the meeting at this time (8:00 p.m.).

Member Maher asked to make a statement. He communicated that he felt the voters of Exeter wanted change and that Member DeSack does not represent that change. He then stated that he would temporarily remove himself from the meeting in protest and he would return. Member Maher left the meeting at this time (8:05 p.m.).

Members Clay and Coutcher both made statements in support of

Chair DeSack. Member Clay communicated that Chair DeSack was very well qualified to fill the position of Chairperson. Also he stated, “You have just seen an example of what the School Committee has been faced with for the last two years.” Member Coutcher communicated that he felt Chair DeSack was far more qualified to fill the position of Chairperson than Member McFadden.

Chair DeSack called the meeting back to order. She clarified that a quorum was in place, they were within the by-laws, and they were all set to move on with the election process.

Member Clay moved to nominate Teri Cicero for Vice Chairperson. Gregory Coutcher seconded. Voted 4 – 0.

Vice Chairperson Cicero moved to nominate Member Coutcher for Clerk. Seconded by Member Clay. Voted 4 – 0.

Member Maher returned to the meeting at this time (8:15 p.m.).

School Committee Member Assignments – Superintendent Seitsinger gave an overview of the School Committee Standing Committees sign-up sheet. The sign-up sheet was passed around for members to select assignments from. While this was taking place, Superintendent Seitsinger recommended moving on to the Student Member Report.

PRESENTATION - Student Member Report – Student Representative Jaclyn Manchester gave an overview of the various student activities, noting that the Sr. Class made over \$700.00 at the holiday bazaar. She also noted that the Drama Department donated the proceeds from their Thursday night performance of A Christmas Carol to a teacher in our district suffering from Alzheimer’s disease.

Important Dates and Meetings – Superintendent Seitsinger gave an overview of upcoming important dates and meetings.

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At this point, the committee returned to the matter of School Committee Member Assignments. Chair DeSack reviewed the outcome of the School Committee Organization Assignments. They are as follows:

**Graduation Team (2) Vice Chair Cicero, Member Maher
Exeter Town Council Liaison (1) Chair DeSack
WG Town Council Liaison (1) Clerk Coutcher
Curriculum Director Liaison (1) Clerk Coutcher**

Legislation Action Group (1) Member Clay

Food Service Liaison (1) Member Maher

West Bay Career & Technical (1) Vice Chair Cicero (Bill Clay)

SALT Visit Representatives (2) Vice Chair Cicero, Vacancy

District improvement Team (3) Chair DeSack, Clerk Coutcher, Member Clay

Member Maher moved to accept the School Committee Organization Assignments. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 5 – 0.

Chair DeSack communicated there was a request from the audience for the committee to move up an item on the Agenda, under New Business, item A. Epi-pen Bus and District Policy #8701. Vice Chair Cicero moved to move up the item. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 5 – 0.

NEW BUSINESS – Epi-pen Bus and District Policy #8701. – Superintendent Seitsinger recommended that after reviewing the policy the public be allowed to speak about their concerns regarding this issue. Superintendent Seitsinger reviewed the amendments made on page 2 of Policy #8701.

Superintendent Seitsinger explained the reason for the review was because of a change in policy with the Laidlaw Bus Company. He has been in correspondence with Laidlaw because of a debate with the level of responsibility of the adults on the buses. Superintendent

Seitsinger suggested it was important that the policy state an age or grade level to self-administer and that the amendment to the policy be approved that night.

Member Clay moved to amend Policy #8701 MEDICATION. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero. Member Maher asked for explanation and clarification regarding Laidlaw's policy changes. Superintendent Seitsinger stated that Laidlaw's policy is unacceptable to our district. Voted 5 – 0.

A parent of two students in our district that carry Epi-Pens spoke regarding this issue. She expressed concerns regarding the fact that a bus driver told her that because of Laidlaw's policy change, she/he would not help her child. She also expressed concerns regarding cell phones and two-way radios not working in certain area of our community and not being able to call for medical emergency assistance. She explained that with regard to self-administering there is not always enough time to do so, as reactions can come quickly and may cause the victim to become unconscious.

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Superintendent Seitsinger recommended that the district (1) Craft a strong letter of support to legislation in order to bring them to

address this issue, (2) Craft a School Committee level letter to Laidlaw specifically sighting the policy and recommendations in order to bring them to the table to address this issue. Chair DeSack agreed with the Superintendent's recommendations. Superintendent Seitsinger recommended the letters be drafted and shown to the Chair for approval in order to expedite the process in a timely fashion.

A pediatrician/member of the community voiced her concerns regarding the Epi-Pen issue. She gave an overview of Anaphylaxis and Epi-Pen use. She provided the committee with a documentation of her findings regarding this issue.

A parent spoke regarding self-administration of an Epi-Pen. She stated that she has given her child an Epi-Pen on several occasions, yet just recently she tried to self-administer an Epi-Pen and could not.

Metcalf's school nurse, Chris McGrane voiced her concerns that last year Laidlaw stopped training their staff in first aid and CPR.

Chair DeSack stated that the School Committee would react to this situation.

PRESENTATION – Rhode Island Department of Education
Presentation – Mr. Rick Richards of the RI Department of Education gave an overview of data collected showing assessment results of

Exeter-West Greenwich student performance. Grade 4 Math results showed all students are above the annual measurable objective. Grade 4 English/Language Arts showed essentially the same picture. Mr. Richards made the following comments regarding Metcalf students with disabilities, “Something very good has happened. Someone in the Metcalf School is beginning to unlock the secret of helping these kids to learn better.” He also noted that the Jr. High is showing progress in Math and projections show they are on an up-swing. With regard to the Sr. High he stated, “I don’t know who is at work in the High School, but I think this is just incredible – IEP kids can learn and in fact are learning just as well as regular kids and their accelerating. I think that’s just amazing.” Mr. Richards suggested we continue to improve on our improvement.

Sharon Lee of the RI Department of Education gave an overview of High School Reform and focused on high school changes and the new Diploma System. She stated that the new Diploma System will support, compliment and enhance what the school is already doing and it will help the school to meet requirements existing in state and local assessments. Their hope is that upon graduation, the Class of 2008 and all students, will have a strong literacy and numbering foundation.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA –Superintendent Seitsinger gave an overview of the Consent Agenda. Member Clay asked that items B. 4. Terminations,

and E. Request to Amend Electricity Contract be pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion. Member Clay moved to accept the consent agenda with items B. 4. and E. pulled. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 5-0.

The following items were approved:

1. Minutes – Regular Minutes of November 23, 2004.

2. Personnel Items

Appointments – (as recommended by the Superintendent)

a. Daniel Ashworth as Junior High School Wrestling Coach for the 2004-2005 school year.

Resignations - (as recommended by the Superintendent with regret)

a. Joyce Matteson – Letter of resignation for the purpose of retirement effective December 31, 2004.

b. Jared Lewis – Letter of resignation as head Boys' Volleyball Coach at the Sr. High School for the 2004 – 2005 school year.

3. Bills – In the amount of \$225,293.52.

4. Correspondence – (1) RIGL 16-2-5.1. Professional Development, (2) Letter from the Rhode Island Department of Education to

Superintendents and School Committee Members, (3) Letter from Susan Woloohojian to Superintendent Seitsinger and Mr. Ross regarding her children and administration of an Epi-Pen, (4) Celebration of Accomplished Teaching Memo, (5) EWGSH Profile 2004-2005, (6) Notice of Legislators Meeting January 10, 2005, (7) Copy of a Letter from Attorney Nicholas Gorham to the Superintendent regarding Open Forum, (8) Copy of Now is the Time to Put Children First By Bob Wickline

End of Consent Agenda

Chair DeSack communicated there was a request from the audience for the committee to move up an item on the Agenda, under New Business, item E. Recess as a Consequence. Vice Chair Cicero moved to move up the item. Seconded by Clerk Coutcher. Voted 5 – 0.

NEW BUSINESS – Recess as a Consequence – A parent in the community asked the School Committee to develop a policy regarding using recess as a consequence. She expressed concerns regarding this issue and stated that losing recess should be used as a last resort for punishment, especially concerning issues other than poor behavior such as not handing in homework.

Superintendent Seitsinger explained there is no district wide policy for recess consequences.

Chair DeSack stated that the School Committee would refer this issue to the policy committee to review along with copies of the parent's documentation she had provided.

Superintendent Seitsinger suggested the committee gather input from all parties such as teachers, principals, parents, etc. and discuss levels of kinds of consequences.

Policies-First Reading-School Vending Machine Policy #5101 – Michael Sepe, owner of Take a Break Vending Company, discussed his concerns regarding the contents of the two snack machines in the Jr. and Sr. High Schools.

Member Clay asked Mr. Sepe if he would be able to provide the snacks on the Kids First List. When Mr. Sepe replied that he would, Member Clay assured him there would not a problem with the snack machine contents as long as he provided snacks on the list.

Member Maher recommended having a sample day to decide what to put in the machines to see what kids will eat.

Member Clay communicated that several districts have already determined what snacks kids like and the information is available to our committee. Member Clay felt the next step would be to look further into what the cafeteria is serving.

Principal Thompson addressed the committee regarding this issue. He communicated that he agreed with some of the committee members' views, that he has been a charter member of the Healthy School Coalition since day one, but he believes the inactivity today causes obesity not diet. He would like to see us provide more healthy choices for students without becoming the "food police".

Chair DeSack communicated they will take this to the policy committee and schedule time to meet with individuals and talk to them about developing a policy of offering kids healthy choices.

A community member stated that she supports this policy of offering kids healthy choices.

Policies-First Reading-Parent Involvement Policy #2301 – Superintendent Seitsinger explained that the district is required by state and federal law to have a Parent Involvement Policy, particularly under Title 1.

Member Maher made the following recommendations with regard to the Parent Involvement Policy: PARENT/GUARDIAN SECTION - Add:

(1) I will ensure that my child is dressed accordingly and has been fed breakfast. (2) I will contact the school in a timely fashion if my child will not be coming to school. STUDENT SECTION – (1) I will do my personal best to respect and care for my school and promote the same with my classmates.

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Superintendent Seitsinger explained that they will take these suggestions, modify the draft, and that would become the second reading.

Member Clay pointed out that developing this policy is a time sensitive matter and it is important to vote on it at the next School Committee meeting on January 11, 2005.

Superintendent Seitsinger communicated that they would submit the policy as a draft/first reading in order to satisfy the Rhode Island Department of Education timeline.

Budget Framework – Superintendent Seitsinger will place this item on the agenda for the next School Committee meeting on January 11, 2005.

The following items were pulled from the consent agenda for discussion -

Member Clay asked for clarification regarding item B. 4 Terminations – How many employees went off the payroll?

Superintendent confirmed 3.6 employees went off the payroll as a consequence of approved action.

Member Clay asked for clarification regarding item E. Request to Amend Electricity Contract – What will the duration of the new fixed price contract be?

Director of Administration Robert Ross communicated that it would be more cost-effective to choose the longer term because it gives the district more predictability with regard to the budget. There was consensus that to lock in for 60 months was advisable.

Member Clay moved to approve the two items pulled from the consent agenda B. 4. and E. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero. Voted 5 – 0.

Member Maher moved to adjourn at 10:30 p.m. Seconded by Vice Chair Cicero. Voted 5 – 0.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

ROBIN A. CERIO
CLERK